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# Say Thank You for Everything

The Secrets of Being a Great Manager – Strategies and Tactics that Get Results

Jim Edwards • Harriman House © 2022 • 250 pages

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## Leadership

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### Take-Aways

- If you had a manager you hated, learn from that example. Now you know what not to do.
- Bosses owe everything to their teams, so express your gratitude.
- Help your team members solve the problems they encounter.
- Boost productivity by teaching your team members the Eisenhower Matrix.
- Help your team stay organized and conflict-free; promote with an eye toward the future.
- Be a decisive leader, especially when it comes to principles, strategy and tactics.
- Bad bosses want to become good bosses – or, at least, to be seen as good bosses.

## Recommendation

Award-winning business journalist Jim Edwards offers valuable information, insights and engaging stories as he tells new bosses how to survive and thrive. He features solid business advice, catchy anecdotes and fun, gossip stories. His readable prose and witty, wise advice targets new bosses, but experienced leaders can also benefit from his guidance as he breaks down leadership methods, tactics and strategies.

## Summary

**If you had a manager you hated, learn from that example. Now you know what not to do.**

Legendary bad bosses become famous for how outrageously they act. Take the haughty editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, Anna Wintour, known for treating employees like servants. Steve Brill, founder of *American Lawyer* and *Court TV*, routinely screamed at his employees. Economics broadcaster Jim Cramer became known for losing his temper.

If you've had a horrible boss, learn a valuable management lesson from that experience: what not to do and how not to be a terrible manager. Take those lessons to heart, and you can become a good boss who does a fine job and wins everyone's admiration.

How do you know if you're good at being a boss? Here's one sign: If your team members act as if earning money is their only motivation, you probably aren't. When should you start to become a better boss? Now.

**Bosses owe everything to their teams, so express your gratitude.**

Bosses depend on their people. If employees aren't productive, the boss isn't either. If employees don't generate profits, neither does the company. If employees make progress, so does the boss – and if not, projects get stuck in the mud and people retreat into cynicism and despair.

*“Your job: to apply judgment.”*

Considering how much bosses owe their employees, leaders need to build the habit of saying “thank you.” Thank your people for their hard work and effort. Thank them for their sales or projects and for the good work they do routinely.

Regularly showing your appreciation for how your staff members help you succeed goes a long way toward defusing their stress or negative feelings. Adopt the tactic: “Praise it when you see it,” and acknowledge your staff members' achievements.

Parents understand that the best way to secure good future behavior from their kids is to praise – and reinforce – such behavior when it occurs. Praise your team members in public, so everyone sees.

Encourage your people to build on their wins, even if it involves work that you didn't lead. Encourage new ideas from your team members, since innovative ideas often translate into increased financial growth and

forward momentum. Nurture the ideas of skilled employees who steadily improve at their jobs. Combine these two positive dynamics – great ideas and top people – to compound and extend your team’s performance gains.

*“Firing people is the worst part of being a manager, but sometimes you have to do it.”*

Good managers need a great plan, top-notch people and quality communications. To keep your team members focused and to avoid drifting or stagnation, create a strategic plan with their involvement and then stick to it.

To achieve solid communication with your team, you may have to repeat your most important messages. Repetition ensures that team members understand your priorities and the importance of your message. Be honest and open with them. Never prevaricate.

### **Help your team members solve the problems they encounter.**

Problems don’t solve themselves. As soon as trouble begins, do all you can to close it down. If things suddenly deteriorate, change may become essential, but you can’t make a major change without discussing the big picture with your team members. Be sure they understand the need for change, heed their input and have them participate in making it happen.

Companies often throw new leaders into the deep end of the pool right from the start, without giving them time to learn on the job. If you are in that situation, turn to your team for guidance. Don’t be prideful. Ask them two questions: “What is working well?” and “What should we do more of?” Veteran team members know what’s going on, and you can learn a lot from them as you build mutual respect and rapport.

Incorporate information from your team members as you create ongoing plans. Using their ideas to inform your strategy is a great way to start out as their manager and to acknowledge their expertise.

*“Hire people who are better than you.”*

As you evolve into becoming a leader, you must go beyond just yelling “Go team!” Leaders must have the courage to face their team’s problems and help solve them.

Take the example of Patrick Doyle, president of Domino’s pizza chain, who took immediate action when research told him that customers actually hated his company’s pizza. To fix this problem, which threatened his entire organization, Doyle had his people go back to square one and completely re-do everything about the company’s core product. Domino’s changed its basic recipes and taught its cooks fresh techniques for preparing its pizzas.

Exhibit similar initiative and courage. Managers should:

- **Be decisive** – Never procrastinate, particularly on tough decisions.
- **Approach change proactively** – Initiate change when you must. Otherwise, external factors will force change on your team members that you and they won’t like.

- **Rely on data** – Make your decisions based on “tangible, measurable and checkable” hard data, not anecdotes or hunches.
- **Hire great people** – Avoid problems by hiring the best possible people. Seek job candidates who can anticipate and fix problems before they worsen and create obstacles.

### **Boost productivity by teaching your team members the Eisenhower Matrix.**

As your team's manager, you're in charge of getting its work accomplished. Make productivity your focus. If you want your team members to give their attention to crucial issues, don't load them down with trivial assignments. Steer them away from “underperforming tasks” and towards productive work with the biggest payoff.

To help your employees become more productive, introduce them to the Eisenhower Matrix, named for former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander during World War II.

*“Treat people fairly and objectively by giving them clear, measurable goals and by collecting objective performance data.”*

Eisenhower was incredibly productive. He oversaw the launch of NASA, took dramatic action to integrate segregated schools in the southern states and developed the US interstate highway system.

The Eisenhower Matrix is the method he used to prioritize his world-class tasks. To put this tactic to work for the people on your team, have them rank their tasks in this order: 1) “Urgent and important,” 2) “Important but not urgent,” 3) “Unimportant but urgent” and 4) “Unimportant and not urgent.”

Once your employees list their tasks in this matrix, they should work on them in order, starting with category one, number one. With this matrix, your staff members' productivity comes to depend on the caliber of their planning.

As a manager, pay attention to the 80-20 rule: You'll generally get 80% of your productivity “from the top 20%” of the people on your team. Focus your management efforts accordingly. Your team should accomplish a little more this month than it did last month, a little more next month than this month, and on into the future.

### **Help your team stay organized and conflict-free; promote with an eye toward the future.**

Organization charts are cold, impersonal and easy to dislike, but they're totally necessary to help your company stay organized. Chaos quickly develops in disorganized firms that lack recognized procedures, processes or staffing charts. That's what happened when Zappos, an online shoe retailer, adopted a flat hierarchy and eliminated job titles, managers and managerial ranks. The company's CEO, the late Tony Hsieh, called the new non-organization scheme “Holacracy.”

*“Avoid making decisions based on subjective factors, such as whether an employee ‘talks a good game’.”*

The system became a disaster for Zappos. It confused employees who no longer knew where they stood. Before long, 14% of the employees quit. Eventually, Zappos ended Holacracy and went back to a more conventional organizational structure.

Work to maintain unity among your team members. Petty personal squabbles can rip your team apart. Quell personal conflicts at the first sign they may be developing. Keep your team members working together to promote teamwork. Consider these tips:

- **Opt for an open floor plan** – Individual offices with closed doors impede good fellowship among employees. Closed doors literally close people off from one another. Stay with an open-space approach.
- **Apply the “rule of five”** – Having three to five members on a work team is manageable, but having six members or more invites dysfunction.
- **Start meetings on time** – Meetings are essential for managers and teams, but members who show up late can delay other people’s work and undercut efficiency and teamwork. Enforce a firm rule that meetings will start promptly.
- **Promote wisely** – When you promote someone on your team, make sure he or she has the qualities to excel if this advance leads to future promotions into more senior positions.

### **Be a decisive leader, especially when it comes to principles, strategy and tactics.**

You need a solid foundation in three primary areas – principles, strategy and tactics – to make effective decisions.

1. **Principles** – These are the basic tenets that distinguish your company and differentiate it from its competitors. Your team can develop its own set of principles, and so can you. Be highly alert to “errors of principle,” which will be fatal to your credibility.
2. **Strategies** – These are your plans for carrying out your firm’s major objectives. The right strategic decisions lead to success, but the wrong strategic decisions can create disaster. Selecting the right strategy is the big decision you make as a manager.
3. **Tactics** – These are the day-to-day decisions your firm makes to stay ship-shape and profitable. You use tactics to keep your team focused and productive in fulfilling its responsibilities. Tactics are your daily bread and butter.

You can usually reverse tactical errors, but reversing “strategic errors” is far more difficult, so plan carefully in order to avoid them.

### **Bad bosses want to become good bosses – or, at least, to be seen as good bosses.**

Hollywood often depicts bosses as type-A personalities who get away with everything and never suffer any consequences. These bad bosses yell at everyone around them all the time. They fire their underlings without thinking twice.

*“Be warned: Data will attempt to drown you.”*

But the boss on the silver screen, especially the bad movie boss, is not a role model for a real-world leader. Consider Steve Brill, who was loud and temperamental as a leader. Brill now hates the way many people think of him. He wants to be seen as a good boss. According to Brill, the stories people tell about him are examples of “stupid, impulsive, terrible management.” As he puts it, acting like that would be “counterproductive because it fosters fear. And it doesn’t make for a great recruiting story.”

Now, Brill wants to become a better boss. If you do too, begin by saying thank you to your people. Demonstrating your appreciation could be the smartest management move you’ll ever make.

## About the Author

**Jim Edwards**, the former editor-in-chief of *Insider*’s news division and founding editor of *Business Insider UK*, won the Neal award for business journalism.



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